

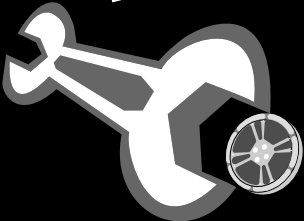
# Breaking the silence on teen dating violence

# ALERT!

Vol. III, No.1

May, 2002

## INSIDE:



**Tools  
for  
Teens**

**Nominate  
a great  
girl you  
know!**



**Turn  
Beauty  
Inside Out**

**Time to  
change the  
channel!**



## Do We Really See the Ads?

Jean Kilbourne, a long-time women's movement and media activist, has written a new book examining media images of women, relationships and addictions. **Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way we Think and Feel**, details the extent to which Americans essentially swim in a sea of constant advertising messages.

Kilbourne contends that mass media is a mechanism for "delivering consumers to advertisers." Advertising pays for media — 100% of broadcast media and 60% of newspaper produc-



tion costs are covered by advertising revenue. Kilbourne says that many consumers think of advertising as just a necessary evil to pay for programming. In contrast, she believes that programming is merely the envelope in which advertising is delivered to consumers.

This extensively documented study is a lively read, heavily illustrated by ads on which Kilbourne comments. So how does this relate to teen dating violence? Kilbourne's thesis is that advertising is a key factor in shaping unrealistic images — for both women/girls and men/boys — not only of their own body image and self-worth, but also of relationships and intimacy.

Kilbourne takes particular exception to the role of advertisers in shaping young women's body images and expectations. She details how girls' and women's magazines often set up no-win situations. On the one hand, they sell emotional connections to food or connect the preparation of food to offering love. On the other hand, both ads and beauty and fashion articles set a standard for thinness that is virtually unattainable for 90 percent of women alive.

Looking at relationships and behavior, Kilbourne reviews a series of ads and articles whose message is that girls should be silent and passive. One ad she includes sells lipstick — a presumably adult cosmetic — by showing a very female pair of lips sucking on a baby pacifier. In a two-page ad spread for Calvin Klein jeans, an apparently angry boy holds his arms up in a forceful

**ALERT!** — a newsletter for people concerned about teen dating violence — is produced by the King County Women's Advisory Board, a program of the King County Department of Community and Human Services.

**This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.**








If you have feedback on any part of the ALERT!, we hope that you will contact us and share your ideas. The ALERT! should be what you need it to be! Contact Carole Antoncich at 205-6486 or [carole.antoncich@metrokc.gov](mailto:carole.antoncich@metrokc.gov) for more information.

*continued on page 5*



## Turn Beauty Inside Out "Changing the Images of and Messages About Girls in Film"

New Moon®: The Magazine for Girls and Their Dreams sponsored **Turn Beauty Inside Out Day** on May 15, 2002 — promoting healthy body image, expanding definitions of beauty and promoting media activism for young women. Among others, they identify the following reasons for needing to "Turn Beauty Inside Out":

-  Eighty percent of 10-year-old American girls diet.
-  Girls are disproportionately affected by eating disorders and cultural demands for thinness.
-  Ninety percent of those afflicted with eating disorders are adolescent and young adult women.
-  Between elementary and high school, the percentage of girls in the U.S. who are "happy with the way I am" drops from 60% to 29%.
-  The number one magic wish for young girls age 11-17 is to be thinner.
-  Between 1996 and 1998, teenage cosmetic surgeries nearly doubled from 13,699 to 24,623, according to the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons. [www.newswecanuse.com](http://www.newswecanuse.com)
-  Thirty-nine percent of women in film are portrayed as "thin" or

"very thin." [www.childrennow.org](http://www.childrennow.org)



At least 58% of women in the movies make or receive comments about their appearance.

[www.childrennow.org](http://www.childrennow.org)



In movies, 31% of women are shown primping, grooming, or otherwise fixated on their appearance, where only 7% of men are shown doing this. [www.childrennow.org](http://www.childrennow.org)

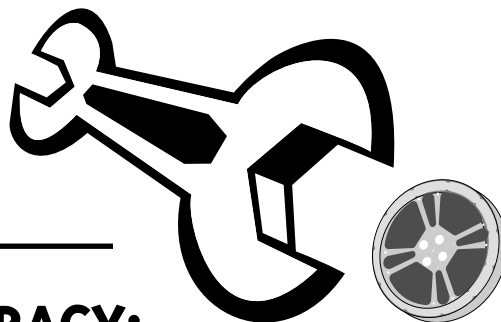
### Individuals and groups organized community events including:

Writing letters to the editor & conducting interviews with local media on the day's purpose.

Holding public screening & discussion of videos about the images of girls and women portrayed to the masses (including **Killing Us Softly** by Jean Kilbourne and others).

Sending a card to a friend telling them

## Toolbox



## MOVIE LITERACY: Getting the Big Picture

(reprinted from New Moon Magazine Web Site at: [www.newmoon.org](http://www.newmoon.org))  
Here are some questions to think about when you watch a movie. Share these questions with the people you're watching a movie with, then sit down and talk about them after the movie.

Describe the main character, using as many words as you can.

Is she interesting, funny, smart, pretty, brave, or kind?

Does she want to change herself? Why or why not?

Does she make choices on her own? Who does she ask for help?

If you could give her advice, what would you say?

Do you think she's a good role model? Why or why not?

Do you admire the girls and women in this film? Why or why not?

Do the female characters look like girls and women you know in real life?

Are they independent, intelligent,

why they have inner beauty.

Creating public exhibits about inner beauty, featuring photos, drawing and writing about people you know who are beautiful (young & old, female & male).

Holding a "Turn Beauty Inside Out" march at a mall or other public place to raise awareness of the issue.

### LOCAL EVENTS

Local Events for **Turning Beauty Inside Out** have occurred in cities across the country, including in Kirkland, Washington. Robert Frost Elementary School featured pictures, drawings, and papers on who the kids in school know that are beautiful on the inside. Guest speakers discussed peer pressure, self esteem, inner beauty, and more. Other cities where activities were organized range from Duluth, MN to Beaverton, OR, to Alaska and to Calcutta, India.

and honest?

How do the girls and women in the movie achieve their goals?

Do the female characters have interesting jobs or adventures?

Does this movie contain violence toward girls or women?

What are some of the ways the characters have inner beauty?

Which characters do you like best and why?

Which characters do you dislike and why?

Now that you've answered these questions, think about your answers. Did the girls and women make good decisions? What motivated them to do the things they did? Do you think this is a positive message for girls? Use your answers to these questions to help you write a movie review, then send it to New Moon Magazine's web-site, where it might be posted. Mail reviews to: New Moon Movie Reviews, P.O. Box 3620, Duluth, MN 55803, or email to [julieh@newmoon.org](mailto:julieh@newmoon.org).

# Don't like the channel? Make Your Own!

**www.mediawatch.com** — From the main page, you can vote for your most-hated ad — choosing from a number of images that feature women in unhealthy and unsafe situations and poses. If you're looking for a video to rent on images of girls and women in advertising or television, you can find one here. And students writing papers about what television sells boys and girls can take advantage of a short, pithy summary.

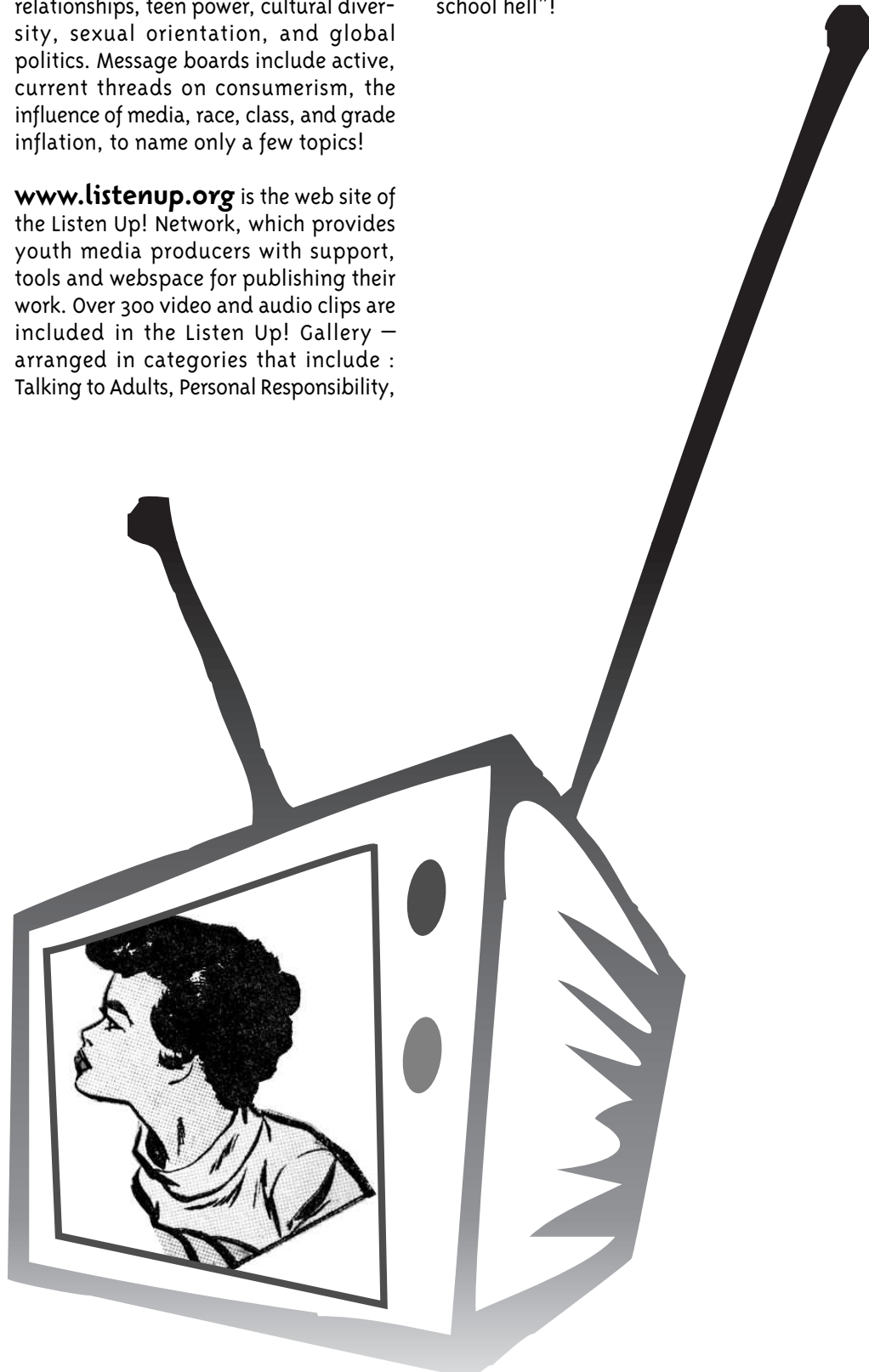
**http://streetlevel.iit.edu/youthprojects/chikweb** — The Girls' Only Project of Street Level Youth, a youth media empowerment project in Chicago, Illinois, includes a page of full-color stickers, designed to be printed out on standard-size Avery labels. With logos like "Don't DIS me if you wanna KISS me!" and "Would you talk to your sister like that!," they are in-your-face, but definitely make their point! In addition to this page, the general <http://streetlevel.iit.edu> site includes "life stories" from immigrant youth, postcards by teen women illustrating their values and strengths, and video clips produced by Chicago area youth.

**http://www.wiretapmag.org/story.html?StoryID=11617** will take you to **A Bumpy Road at Best: Another Look at Teenage Romance**, an article in the WireTap archives by Mikhaila Richards. WireTap describes itself as

"independent information source by and for socially conscious youth." It produces a weekly magazine of news, opinion and art, an online gallery where youth writers and artists can showcase their work, and a space for youth to network and organize. Articles in the archives range over relationships, teen power, cultural diversity, sexual orientation, and global politics. Message boards include active, current threads on consumerism, the influence of media, race, class, and grade inflation, to name only a few topics!

**www.listenup.org** is the web site of the Listen Up! Network, which provides youth media producers with support, tools and webspace for publishing their work. Over 300 video and audio clips are included in the Listen Up! Gallery — arranged in categories that include: Talking to Adults, Personal Responsibility,

which includes the clip "This is Your Life," or check out "A World of Hurt" and "Love is Blind" in the Pregnancy and Fatherhood section. Along with these messages on dating violence, you'll find clips on drugs, homelessness, stereotypes, staying in school and getting past "high school hell"!



## DreamWorlds II: Desire, Sex and Power in Music Video

This is an updated version of DreamWorlds, originally produced in 1991 by filmmaker and media critic Sut Jhally. DreamWorlds II examines MTV, the music industry, and images of women and men and their sexual interactions in music videos. The video uses clips from television and cinema, as well as from music videos themselves, without their musical accompaniment, in order to highlight the images and story lines themselves. The video makes the point that "women in music television inhabit a fantasy landscape, a 'DreamWorld' where the

norms of femininity as nymphomania and dependence on and subservience to men. In this DreamWorld, women vastly outnumber men, attraction is instant, and sex happens without courtship. All men are promised sexual gratification, including the viewer." DreamWorlds II is available from the Media Education Foundation, [www.mediaed.org](http://www.mediaed.org), for purchase for \$125 for high schools and non-profit organizations.

### Media Education Foundation – Offering Resources for Media Literacy

Other videos available from the Media Education Foundation include:

➤ **Game Over** – an examination of sex, race and violence in video and computer games and how they reflect societal stereotypes of different groups.

➤ **Killing Us Softly 3** and **Slim Hopes** – both by Jean Kilbourne (see related article in this issue), these videos examine depictions of women, passivity and extreme body images in advertising.

➤ **The Date Rape Backlash** – a discussion featuring academics, researchers and authors examining how date rape has been trivialized by media as just "bad sex."

➤ **Tough Guise** – Making the point that discussions of gender stereotypes most frequently focus on images of women, this video takes a critical look at the stereotypes and expectations that shape images of masculinity and strength, including how images of masculinity tie to images of violence, and how stereotypes of masculinity vary by racial/ethnic group.

One very useful feature of the Media Education Foundation website ([www.mediaed.org](http://www.mediaed.org)) is the inclusion of study guides for many of their videos on the website. Even without the videos, these study guides present substantial background on the video subjects, and include classroom, group and writing exercises.

### Using music videos to spark group discussion

The DreamWorlds II video and its study guide suggest ways to use music videos to spark group discussion.

➤ Run several music videos **without** the sound turned on.

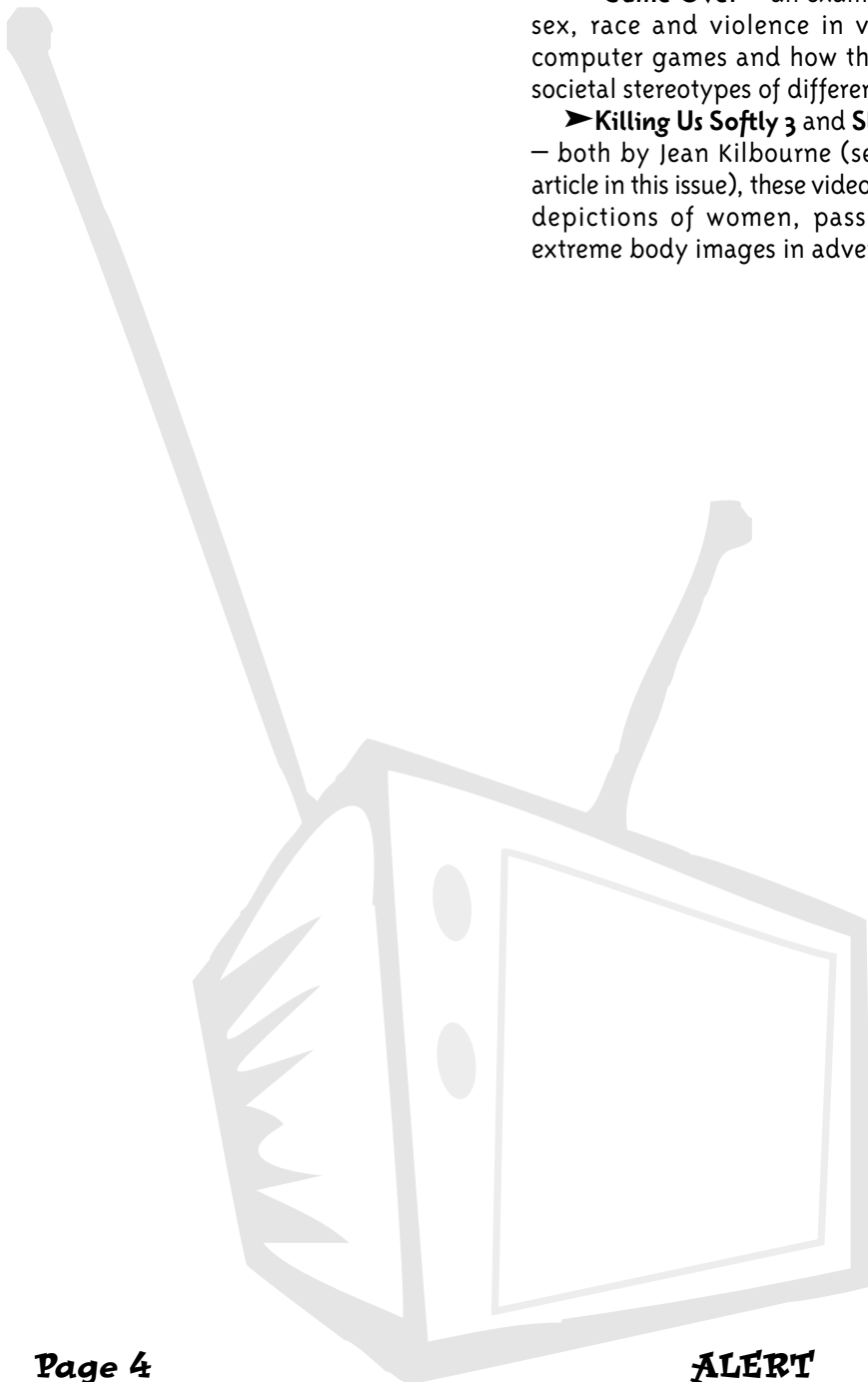
➤ Preferably, use music videos with which group members are not familiar – perhaps a few years old, or in another language.

➤ Have the group create a list of characters and roles that are "allowed" for women in the video world. Do the same for men.

➤ How do these roles compare to roles actually assumed by women and men in everyday life?

➤ Who is included in video images? Who is not included?

➤ What are the plot lines used in music videos? What if these plot lines defined how men and women can relate to each other in daily relationships? Would those be relationships that group members would want to be part of?



## Who Can Help?

These agencies can provide crisis response to teens experiencing dating violence:

**Youth Eastside Services:** 425-747-4937 — Ask for Lisa Cordova, Sheri Davis or Belinda Lafferty

**New Beginnings:** 206-926-3014 — ask for Adrienne

**DAWN** (Domestic Abuse Women's Network) — 425-656-8423 X252 — Ask for Kelly

**KCSARC** (King County Sexual Assault Resource Center) — when sexual abuse involved — 1-800-825-7273

**AP ADVICE** @ Asian Counseling & Referral Service: (Asian Pacific-Islanders Against Dating Violence Involving Community Education) - ask for Amy HyunAh Moline — 206-695-7585

## Ads continued from page 1



stance on one page. On the facing page, a girl, eyes downcast and hand covering her mouth, stands passively. An ad for Versace underwear shows a fit, muscular young man in a boxing stance. In contrast, an ad from Macy's shows a young woman, in a filmy, short dress, slouched back in a hard back chair, her legs at an angle in a physically vulnerable pose.

Kilbourne goes on to comment on the role of advertising in reinforcing male and female sex roles. She uses automobile, cigarette and liquor ads to illustrate how advertising sets the standard for strong, controlling and often threatening "real men." An ad

## Nominate A Great Girl YOU Know!

**Do you know a PHENOMENAL African American Girl?** ESSENCE magazine is featuring an article on phenomenal African American adolescent and teenage girls (no older than 18 years of age) for next year's anniversary issue.

### What kind of phenomenal girls are they looking for?

Girls who have achieved outstanding academic records

Girls who have overcome incredible odds in their personal lives

Girls who have given of themselves in unselfish, amazing ways

Girls who are making a huge difference in their perspective communities

Girls who have started their own companies and are making a lot of money

Girls who are political and are standing up for the rights of others

If you know of someone who fits this description send a brief bit with their name, contact info, and the reason you think they are awesome to Tara Roberts at [TRobe70@aol.com](mailto:TRobe70@aol.com).



for Smirnoff shows a wolf hidden in a pack of sheep, wearing a dangerous grin. An ad for a nightclub carries the line "If your date won't listen to reason, try a Velvet Hammer," above a large cocktail.

Many of the ads that Kilbourne uses to illustrate her points are extreme — a "universal sign" drawing of a boy shooting a girl in the head is the sole image in a skateboard ad. An advertisement for jeans shows three men holding a woman upside down and appearing to assault her. Other ads are more subtle — a woman reclining on a dining table appears either vulnerable or oddly relaxed. And that is exactly Kilbourne's point. She believes that we do not react with horror to the most extreme ads, because the overall tone of the culture — girls' and women's submission and boys and men's control — is set in the thousands of much more subtle images we observe daily.

---

**Kilbourne's thesis is that advertising is a key factor in shaping unrealistic images — for both women/ girls and men/ boys — not only of their own body image and self-worth, but also of relationships and intimacy.**

---

Why read this book? Aren't we smarter than all that? Kilbourne answers: "If you're like most people, you think that advertising has no influence on you. This is what advertisers want you to believe. But, if that were true, why would companies spend over \$200 billion a year on advertising?"

# How Widespread is Teen Dating Violence?

## Recent Research

Liz Claiborne, Inc. recently sponsored a survey of 477 teens aged 14-17 and 456 parents of teens in the same age group on Social Control, Verbal Abuse and Violence Amongst Teenagers.

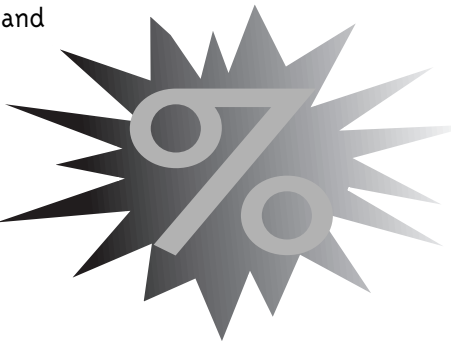
The study found that nearly a quarter of teenagers know at least one student in their school who has been physically hit by a person they were dating. Among this group, eleven percent know multiple victims of physical violence and 30 percent have themselves witnessed a teen dating violence incident.

More widespread than physical abuse, verbal abuse of dating partners was observed by forty percent of the students interviewed.

Findings also mirrored the “warning signs” of dating violence that are frequently published for youth:

☀ 27 percent of students knew peers who were **isolated from** other friends by their dating partner;

☀ 22 percent knew students who were required to **“check in”** by their partners; and



☀ One in ten knew someone whose dating partner **dictated what they can and cannot wear**.

In contrast to the high visibility of dating violence among teenagers,

parents surveyed were often unaware of the problem. Only eight percent of parents knew of any students at their children’s schools who had been physically attacked by their dates — suggesting that teens do not share this information with their parents, or seek their counsel on dating violence.

As a result of what was learned in the survey, Liz Claiborne, Inc. partnered with the Empower Program to produce two handbooks: **A Parent’s Guide to Teen Dating Violence** and **A Teen’s Handbook: What You Need to Know about Dating Violence**. Both are available on the Liz Claiborne web site at: [www.lizclaiborne.com/lizinc/lizworks/women](http://www.lizclaiborne.com/lizinc/lizworks/women). Print versions are available through the Women’s Work order line at: 1-800-449-7867.

## Tools to combat teen dating violence

S  
P  
U.S. P  
WA  
N 1046

King County Women’s Advisory Board  
821 Second Ave., Suite 500  
Seattle, WA 98104-1502